

## STARTING SOLID FOODS

About the sixth to the seventh month, the infant should have the coordination, especially in the tongue, and the ability to digest solid foods. The term solid at this stage of life means mashed or pureed foods. Adding solids to an infant's diet does not mean replacing the milk it is eating from the breast or the bottle. The infant will still need about the same amount of milk that it was taking before.

When a baby begins to eat solid foods, be prepared for some messy times. Infants are born with an extrusion reflex. This is a reflex that makes the infant push out or gag on foods except for liquids. The infant does not have the ability and coordination to move solid food from the front of the mouth to the back of the mouth until he/she is about six months old.

When beginning to feed the baby solid food, place a small amount of baby food into a bowl and feed the infant from the bowl. Discard any uneaten food from the bowl. Do not feed the infant directly from the container. This allows germs and bacteria to contaminate the container of food, and, while stored, these germs and bacteria can multiply and cause illness if eaten.

Begin by feeding the baby single foods rather than mixed foods. If the infant has an allergic reaction, this will help you to eliminate certain foods. For example, if an infant had never eaten carrots or turkey before and is given the mixed turkey and carrots and has a reaction to the food, it is difficult to determine if the reaction was due to the turkey or if it was due to the carrots.

Order of introducing foods:

1. **CEREALS AND BREADS:** Be careful of using processed and textureless baby cereals. The processing takes away many needed nutrients. Texture adds variety and interest to eating, so use cereals with some texture. Breast milk or formula, or fruit juices should be used when mixing the cereals because cow milk should be avoided until late in the first year, and water lacks flavor and nutrients.
2. **VEGETABLES:** Use carrots, squash, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. Corn is difficult to digest and should be avoided until later. Peas and beans are highly allergenic and should be avoided until the twelfth month. Vegetables should be given before fruits due to the natural sugars and sweet taste of fruits. If fruit is given first, it is difficult to get an infant to like vegetables. Allow an infant to acquire a taste for vegetables and then introduce fruits.
3. **FRUITS:** Use applesauce, apricots, pears, cantaloupe, and bananas. Citrus fruits are highly allergenic and should be avoided until the twelfth month.

4. **PROTEIN:** Use poultry, lamb, beef, and pork (meats should be introduced in this order). Fish is highly allergenic and should be avoided until late in the first year. Eggs also contain protein. Only the yolk of the egg should be used before the age of one because the white of the egg is highly allergenic.
5. **DAIRY:** Use breast milk or formula until late in the first year because cow's milk is highly allergenic. Dairy products such as yogurt, cheese, and pudding also contain cow's milk and should be avoided until late in the first year.

#### FOODS TO AVOID

Citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, etc.

Egg whites

Fish

Peanut butter

Chocolate

Honey

Salted snacks

Highly processed foods

Foods loaded with additives and artificial colors

Soda pop

#### DRINKING FROM A CUP

An infant will begin showing an interest and try drinking from a cup around ten months of age. A teacher beaker, which is a cup with a lid and a slotted mouth piece on it, is an excellent item to use during this time. (Teacher: Show the students a teacher beaker.) By 15-18 months of age, a child will be drinking efficiently out of a cup that is half filled.